

'Find something you love'

By BRUCE BARRETT, CLIPPER COLUMNIST
BRUCE@DUXBURYCLIPPER.COM

I knew Barbara first. She died years ago, but Barbara Arsenian touched my life and many others with her spirit and sparkle, touched us enough to save lives. I cherish the moments later on when I could return the favor in a small way, enough to reassure her a little bit when she could use it.



WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?

Now Paul Arsenian has died. Active for many years in Duxbury affairs, Paul once gave me a simple formula for becoming someone.

"Find something you love," he said. "Then just get involved."

I'm not sure which part was more

important, but I know that the second was where the pay dirt lay. He would mention it, from time to time, when upstarts would come along and try to scoot into town government, the occasional flash in the pan. Paul was always inclusive, always encouraging, always a gentleman, but he did maintain a simple rule. Some people call it "paying your dues." Not Paul. He called it, "getting involved."

It was a simple enough concept. How could someone who had never signed up for the grunt work, or never

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When he wasn't serving up flapjacks at the Mother's Day breakfast for the Rotary Club, Paul Arsenian volunteered his time in numerous Duxbury causes. Paul was always inclusive, always encouraging, always a gentleman, but he did maintain a simple rule. Some people call it "paying your dues." Not Paul. He called it, "getting involved."

He served us all

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carved out the time month after month to attend the open public meetings of a town committee ever expect to be taken seriously as a candidate for town office? Paul was always polite, but his admonition carried some weight, too. I've seen, over the years, flashes in the pan who come and go in and around Duxbury's town offices, elected or appointed, and other people who stay and grow, take breaks and return again.

Some call it networking. Not a natural skill for me, the term always seemed a little plastic, a little mechanical. Paul never seemed plastic or mechanical. Instead, he was always genuine, always comfortable, as if there was nothing more to it than having a few friends over for a cookout.

The work he put into those "cookouts" was enormous. With his friends, Paul's accumulation of experience in local election politics and town governance could make all the difference in the world. His mastery of voter lists and election-day phone calling couldn't do the impossible, but he could make a big difference.

To this day, I have no idea if Paul was a Democrat, Republican, Independent or Other. His engagement in Duxbury government was non-denominational. I don't want to put words in his mouth, but I think he opposed the notion of party politics at the town level.

Controversy? No problem. Debate? Bring it on, along with a smile and a ready handshake. Experience, wisdom and commitment? Now that's starting to sound like Paul. That's where the motivation of "something you love" meets the work and seasoned experience of "get involved."

I think of Paul each time I find some moment of success. Whenever I see others taking a well-earned role in running something around town, or in helping out, I think of Paul and his simple formula. I have yet to master self discipline, so the greatest key for me is the first part: find something you love. Agriculture, arts and entertainment, exotic faiths and cultures with their languages and people, wordsmithing; that's part of my list. Any success I have in sharing those things with others I owe to the second piece: get involved.

The day I called the Clipper's Paula Maxwell to ask if she thought I had a shot at taking on this column, I had Paul Arsenian in mind. I knew I would be getting involved. I rejoice that, soon after that day, I thanked him personally for his advice. Now it might be your turn. Find something you love, and get involved.